



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

FEB 14 2006

Dear Dr. Solomon:

Thank you for your letter of February 1 to Secretary Rice regarding the political crisis in Ethiopia. We ask you to share this response with your colleagues and organizations who cosigned this letter.

The United States shares your concerns regarding domestic political developments within Ethiopia and is on the side of the Ethiopian people in support of democracy, peace, national reconciliation, and the rule of law. We have stated previously that steps that appear to criminalize dissent impede progress on democratization. We are gravely concerned about the Ethiopian government's continued detention of protestors for exercising their right to freedom of speech. We are encouraged that the organizations that you and your colleagues represent support dialogue between the Ethiopian government and opposition parties and civil society. We are pleased to note that the Ethiopian government has begun just such a dialogue with those opposition leaders who have taken their seats in Parliament.

We have, and will continue to, call for such dialogue to expand to include the full spectrum of organizations that represent the Ethiopian people. It is, however, incumbent on all entities and organizations that are committed to the prosperity and democratization of Ethiopia to abide by the rule of law. The United States shares your concern of growing disillusionment with dialogue among some sectors of Ethiopian society. It is, therefore, incumbent upon Ethiopia's leaders, including those from among the organizations that you and your colleagues represent, to demonstrate the leadership needed to regain this segment of society's commitment to, and confidence in, resolution of the current political crisis through dialogue and reconciliation. Continued divisiveness and fiery rhetoric will only further inflame the on-going crisis.

As you note, the charges brought against political opposition, civil society, and media leaders are serious. The United States has long been on the record as calling for the Ethiopian government to ensure a fair, speedy, and transparent trial for those charged, and to either charge or release

promptly those who remain detained without charge. We look to the Government of Ethiopia to expeditiously present the evidence against those charged--evidence that will certainly be exposed to intense judicial and international scrutiny. Until then, those detained should be granted unimpeded access to legal counsel and their families.

We are encouraged by your commitment to help transform Ethiopia into a truly peaceful and prosperous democracy. I look to you to help bring stability and prosperity to Ethiopia.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Donald Yamamoto".

Donald Yamamoto
Deputy Assistant Secretary
For African Affairs